



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



ROUNDS APPLAUDS COMMITTEE PASSAGE OF CRITICAL VA ACCOUNTABILITY REFORMS

U.S. Senator Mike Rounds, a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, applauds the committee's passage of several pieces of legislation aimed at increasing accountability at the scandal-ridden U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and improving veterans' benefits and health care.

"We have a duty to make certain the VA is properly managed so they can provide timely, quality care to our nation's greatest heroes," said Rounds. "I'm pleased the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee came together to pass meaningful reforms to the VA system. I will continue to work to keep the VA accountable. Our veterans deserve better than the current structure."

The committee approved comprehensive accountability measures – the *Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act of 2015* and a bill to prohibit the VA from granting bonuses to employees found guilty of misconduct – that seek to protect both veterans and taxpayers.

In addition, the committee today voted unanimously to approve the *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2015* to boost veterans' disability compensation to adjust for rising costs of living.

The *Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act of 2015* (S.1082) gives the secretary of the VA firing authority over any delinquent employee within the department. This legislation seeks to expand on a provision included in the *Veterans' Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014* that gave the secretary firing authority over senior executives in light of the wait-time scandal that erupted in Phoenix, Ariz.

The second accountability measure passed by committee was S.627 to prevent the VA from awarding bonuses to negligent employees. The bill also gives the VA authority to rescind bonuses paid out to employees who are later found to have violated a department policy or law.

Additionally, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs approved the *21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery and Other Improvements Act* (S.1203), an omnibus bill that includes several provisions to improve veterans' health care and streamline veterans' benefits services.

Each of the bills approved by the committee will now be reported favorably to the full Senate.

Inside this issue:

SD Guard Readiness Training	2
WW I Veteran Receives New Headstone	3
SDCMF	3
MJFSVH Update	4
Veterans Stand Down	5
Upcoming Events	5

TRAINING ENHANCES SD GUARD'S FORWARD SUPPORT COMPANY READINESS

Members of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Forward Support Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion of Parkston and Huron are participating in eXportable Combat Training Capability, a large scale training exercise, at Camp Ripley, July 5-19.

National Guard units from all over the United States, including numerous ones from South Dakota, are participating in the two-week event.

While at the XCTC, units participate in training lanes leadership feels will test their soldiers. Driving in a tactical convoy or performing first aid on a wounded soldier are just a few examples of tasks soldiers can be evaluated on.

The FSC recently participated in tactical convoy and vehicle recovery lanes. The soldiers prepare for the training lanes just like they would prepare for real world missions, doing pre-combat checks and inspections of themselves and their vehicles. They perform battle drills - different scenarios that may take place while on a mission, which prepare soldiers for different situations they may face on the battlefield.

During one training lane, the company recovered a Humvee that had broken down due to mechanical troubles. The unit has recovery vehicles that make it possible for them to recover something as small as a Humvee or as large as a M1A1 Abrams Tank. The FSC can recover any piece of military equipment the Army puts on the battlefield.

"This was a great lane for us to use our skills that we have learned over the years as a Forward Support Company," said 1st Sgt. John Dornbusch. "We have many soldiers who have been doing this a long time, and they are great at what they do. These lanes helped us to fine tune those skills that will be beneficial for real world events on and off the battlefield."

During the lanes, trainers set up different scenarios for the soldiers to react to. On one of the lanes, an improvised explosive device was placed before the FSC's arrival in hopes the soldiers who see it take appropriate actions and call up the proper reports. This can be very beneficial on the battlefield as it can show trends, attacks and events on certain routes.

In addition to the training lanes, the FSC provides fuel and maintenance support for themselves and other SDARNG's units. They also provide food for the majority of the soldiers from 153rd Engineer Battalion participating in the exercise. More than 300 hot meals were served by their mess section twice a day from their containerized kitchen.

The FSC's mission is to provide direct and expected combat sustainment support to engineer battalions, including recovery support and field level maintenance. Historically, the FSC has shown an extremely high level of proficiency on this mission reflected by two consecutive Superior Unit Awards and receiving the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence.



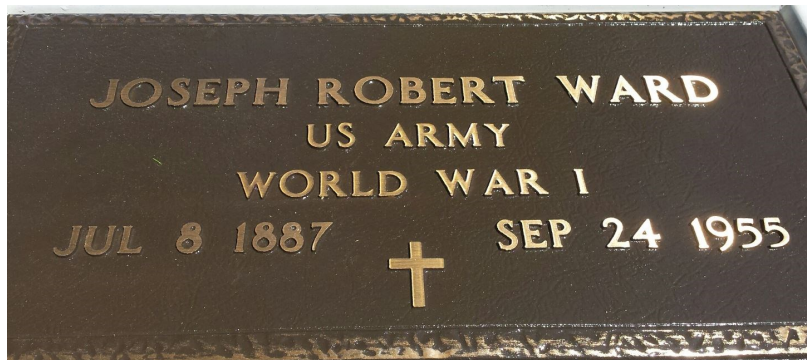
DAVIDSON ENSURES THAT WW I VETERAN RECEIVES CORRECTED HEADSTONE

Sixty years after his death, a World War I veteran from Texas whose final resting spot is in South Dakota will soon receive the correct headstone.

Joseph Robert Ward served in the U.S. Army during WWI. He died Sept. 24, 1955, and was buried at the Graceland Cemetery in Mitchell. Ward's grave has been marked by a small temporary headstone for 60 years.

Davison County Veterans Service Officer Jessica Davidson says the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs first denied the headstone request because

there was no record of Ward's discharge. Davidson, however, was able to get paperwork from the National Archives proving Ward's discharge. The Black Hills National Cemetery then got involved in the effort and facilitated the new headstone. The cemetery expects to receive the new bronze-plated headstone in the coming days.



 <p>SAVE — THE — DATE</p>	<p>South Dakota Coalition for Military Families</p> <p>— 3rd Annual Symposium —</p>					
<p>September 9, 2015</p>	<p>REGISTER — at SDCMF.org Beginning July 1st</p>					
<p>Holiday Inn Spearfish Convention Center Spearfish, SD</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="609 1564 836 1659">HOT TOPICS</td> <td data-bbox="909 1554 1453 1669"> Military Employment Opportunities in SD Minnesota's Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program Wounded Warrior Project </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="609 1711 836 1806">FEATURED SPEAKER</td> <td data-bbox="909 1711 1453 1816"> Federal Dept. of Labor Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations, Ralph Charlip </td> </tr> </table>		HOT TOPICS	Military Employment Opportunities in SD Minnesota's Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program Wounded Warrior Project	FEATURED SPEAKER	Federal Dept. of Labor Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations, Ralph Charlip
HOT TOPICS	Military Employment Opportunities in SD Minnesota's Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program Wounded Warrior Project					
FEATURED SPEAKER	Federal Dept. of Labor Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations, Ralph Charlip					
	<table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="544 1879 828 1984">  </td> <td data-bbox="844 1900 1209 1963"> For more information, go to SDCMF.org or email info@SDCMF.org </td> <td data-bbox="1226 1879 1518 1984">  </td> </tr> </table>			For more information, go to SDCMF.org or email info@SDCMF.org		
	For more information, go to SDCMF.org or email info@SDCMF.org					

VETERANS HOME CONSTRUCTION AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Brad Richardson, Superintendent of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home, notes that if construction at the new veterans continues at the current tempo, he will have keys in hand by the first of November.

Richardson and his team have been meeting for months to plan for moving day. Their goal is to make sure our heroes have a quick and smooth transition into their new home. Residents have all been assigned their rooms and have been briefed on the moving process.

Contractors are busy working on landscaping projects as well as the biomass heating system.

Entering through the front doors, visitors will see office space for staff and Main Street, which includes the barber shop/beauty salon, the chapel, the mail room, the auditorium and the Bistro.

Leaving Main Street, you will enter the neighborhood areas where are heroes will live.



Photo courtesy of Curt Nettinga of the Hot Springs Star

Veterans Stand Down

Friday, Sept. 25, 2015

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

VFW

3601 S. Minnesota Ave.

Sioux Falls, SD

TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE

**Shuttle service will be every 1/2 hour starting at
8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. from the following locations:**

Nites Inn Parking Lot on 12th St

Vet Center at 3200 W. 49th Street

Union Gospel Mission on 8th and Railroad

**On-the-spot help including meals, clothing,
community housing referral, medical & dental treatment,
readjustment counseling, legal assistance, Women Veteran
services and much more!**

**For more information call:
(605)-330-4552**

Upcoming Events

Aug. 2—Fall River Freedom Ride Poker Run—Hot Springs— 8:30—10:00 am Registration
Aug. 5-9—AVTT Traveling Vietnam Wall Comes to Sioux Falls (Sanford Pentagon Sports Complex)
Aug. 18—SFVAHCS Women's Health Clinic Open House (exclusively for women veterans) 3:30 pm
Aug. 18—Turner County "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans" Program—Turner County Fairgrounds—
Freedom Stage—Heritage Park—Parker—5:00—7:00 pm
Aug. 24-27—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug. 26—SFVAHCS Women's Health Clinic Open House and Ribbon Cutting 3:30 pm
Sept. 3—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair
Sept. 5—727th DAV Poker Run—Brookings National Guard Armory
Sept. 11 — Stand Down—Wagner—National Guard Armory—9:00 am—1:00 pm
Sept. 12—Vietnam Veterans of America State Council Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—Noon
Sept. 16—SD Veterans Council—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am
Sept. 18—POW-MIA Ceremony—Sioux Falls Veterans Memorial Park—6:30 pm
Sept. 18—Ellsworth AFB Retiree Appreciation Day— Exhibits 9:00 am—3:00 pm (MDT)—Luncheon 11:00
am—1:00 pm (MDT) - EAFB
Sept. 25—Veterans Stand Down—VFW—Sioux Falls (3601 S. Minnesota Ave.) - 9:00 am—2:00 pm
Oct. 5—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Oct. 10—DAV Fall Conference—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls
Nov. 7—Vietnam Veterans of America State Council Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—Noon
Dec. 8— Governor's Budget Address—Pierre

2016

Jan. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Jan. 12—SD Legislative Session Opens—Pierre
Jan. 14—Veterans Legislative Breakfast—Pierre
Jan. 27-28—State Tribal Relations Days—Pierre
Apr. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
April 15-17—DAV Convention—Rapid City
Jul. 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

